

DIRECTIONS

From the intersection of Route 195 and Route 32, head south on Route 32 for .83 miles. Turn right onto Merrow Road and go for 0.1 miles. Parking area entrance is on the left.

Suggested Park Activities



77 Picnicking



Canoeing

Prohibited Park Activities

Unleashed Dogs Mountain / Motor Biking Camping / Camp Fires Horseback Riding



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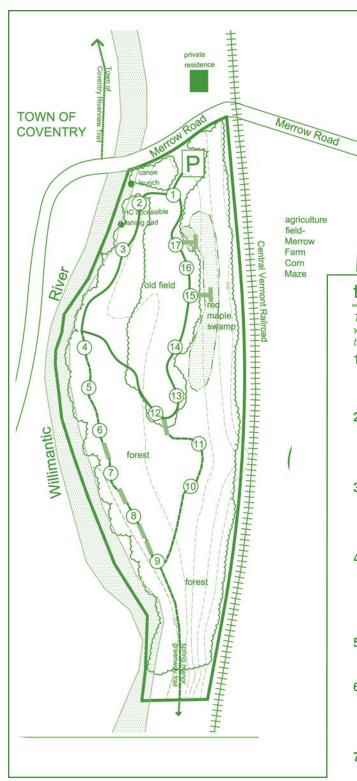
For up-to-date trail information or to download maps click on www.mansfieldct.org/trailguides/

Merrow Meadow Park

Mansfield, CT

Merrow Meadow is a 33-acre park along the Willimantic River containing an old field, wetlands and wooded sections. Part of the Willimantic River Greenway, Merrow Meadow connects north to the Coventry Riverview Trail across the river and south to the Spring Manor Trail and Mansfield Depot.





Merrow Meadow
Park

O' 100' 200' 400'

Legend

B. Paved Trail
Gravel Trail
Connecting Trail
Railroad Tracks
Parking Area
Topographic Line

trail guide

Route

32

There are 0.54 miles of walking trails, (0.31 miles paved for accessibility), within the park boundaries. The trails are blazed in white and wind through the following points of interest:

Trail Guide Points of Interest

Boardwalk/ Bridge

Revised: January 2006

- Park History The Merrow family donated this parcel to the Town in December 1990. The main portion of this narrow strip of land was once a hay field. In 1994 the Town received a grant to develop the current trail system.
- The Willimantic River Serving as a major power source for mills in the past, the river flows from Stafford Springs to Willimantic, forming the boundary between several towns. It is popular for fishing and kayaking. For detailed information click on www.willimanticriver.org.
- 3. Flood Plain Vegetation The riverside trail is under water for periods of time after heavy rains and spring snow melt. The flood plain forest is a good place to look for wildflowers that bloom in early spring before being shaded by the emerging tree canopy.
- 4. Young Forest Forest succession is the progression of tree types in an area returning to a forest after having been cleared. The trees on the east side of the trail are young black birches and hornbeams. The west side of the trail has much older trees. These oaks and maples formed a shady edge along the river even when the other side was open fields.
- Aquatic Life Take a moment to visit the edge of the river.
 Here many small aquatic species can be seen in and on the river, such as water striders on the surface or crayfish under rocks.
- 6. Birds of the Park Woods, river, marsh, and swamp come together to make perfect places for nesting, feeding, drinking, bathing and hiding. Watch for chickadees, blue jays, orioles, and catbirds in the trees, and ducks, kingfishers, and great blue herons along the river.
- 7. Fish Devoid of fish only 30 years ago because of severe water pollution, the river now has been cleaned up and sup-

- ports up to 20 different species of game fish. Species include brown and rainbow trout stocked by the Ct. DEP and smallmouth bass.
- 8. Shrub Swamp The alders growing here are shrubs and will never grow to be full sized trees. Although this area may not appear to be a swamp in late summer, the soil is waterlogged most of the time even when water is not visible on the surface.
- Upland Forest The forest you see on the hillside is very different from the flood plain forest along the river. Trees and shrubs that live in drier soils are found on this higher ground, such as pines and oaks.
- 10. Changing Vegetation Possibly this was once a wet meadow; however, in recent years water-tolerant goldenrods have become the dominant vegetation. Now they are giving way to water-tolerant shrubs like dogwoods, winterberrys, and willows. The non-native invasive shrubs like multiflora rose and autumn olive are also present. These vegetation changes following disturbances are known as succession.
- 11. Water Shapes the Landscape The movements of the glaciers and the streams and rivers formed by melting glaciers were major earthmovers of the past. Today, this stream continues the shaping process by eroding soils and carrying them away.
- 12. Toad Wallow Small pools that dry up during most summers provide habitat for young amphibians. Wood frogs, American toads and spring peepers lay their eggs in the early spring when there is plenty of water. The young hatch and rapidly form lungs, develop legs and leave the water by early summer before the pools dry up. This dry period prevents fish from living here and eating tadpoles.
- 13. Marsh The grass-like plants that live in this small marsh are able to grow in shallow water or water-saturated soils that would drown the root systems and kill most shrubs and trees. Full sunlight, fertile soil and abundant water make marsh wetlands the most productive wildlife habitats.
- 14. Old Field Plants This grassy field was probably once forested. Early settlers cleared it for agriculture, and kept it free of trees and shrubs by cultivation, grazing or repeated mowing. Because the field is drier and less fertile than the surrounding wetlands, grasses and wild flowers dominate the vegetation.
- **15. Red Maple Swamp** A wetland dominated by trees or shrubs is called a swamp. These water-tolerant trees and shrubs include ash, elm, blueberry and winterberry.
- 16. Old Field Habitat The grasses and wildflowers here support a very special group of animals. Caterpillars, which later will become butterflies, and grasshoppers can be seen on the leaves of the grasses. Birds, especially sparrows, make their nests on the ground in the tall grass. Smaller mammals like rabbits, voles, and mice live in tunnels under the dead grass.
- 17. Seasonal Pools The sunny pools in the wetlands surrounding the old field are crucial to aquatic plants and animals that need warm shallow water, plentiful food, and protection from predators to survive.